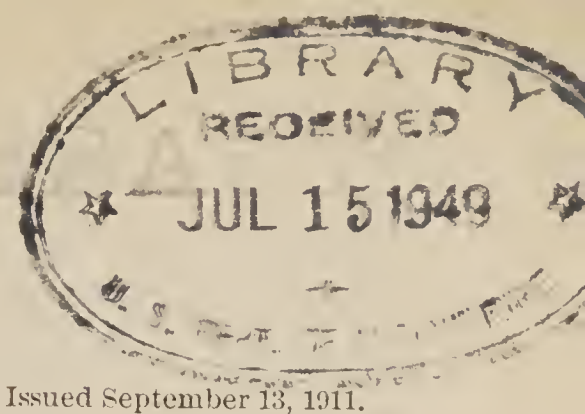


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DISTRIBUTION OF THE AMERICAN EGRETS.

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The accompanying maps show the distribution of the two common white herons or "egrets," so called from the long plumes or "aigrettes" worn during the breeding season. The demand of the millinery trade for these plumes has caused such wholesale slaughter of these two species that they are almost extinct over large areas where they were formerly common. The maps indicate the original range of the species, before fashion decreased their numbers, and therefore the range which they may be expected again to occupy if sufficient protection from persecution is afforded.

Fortunately in the case of each of these species, breeding colonies still remain in the southern United States to serve as centers of distribution to the districts formerly included in the range.

Each spot on the maps represents a positive record—either the capture of a specimen which is now preserved in one of the larger public museums, notably the United States National Museum, at Washington, or a record, published or unpublished, now on file in the Biological Survey, of the observation of the birds by persons so familiar with the species as to leave no reasonable doubt of the correctness of the identification. It should be understood that these spots represent only a small proportion of the places at which the birds actually bred. They outline the regions in which the birds occurred and throughout which they were likely to be found in any favorable locality. It should also be understood that the birds are now more common than the records published during the last ten years would seem to indicate. Severe persecution has driven the few remaining wanderers to seek the remote uninhabited parts of the country, and it is only when a bird strays into a settled region that it is noted and recorded.

EGRET. (*Herodias egretta*.)

This egret is variously called American egret, white egret, white heron, and often the great white heron, to distinguish it from the

smaller, snowy egret. It breeds in colonies and the nests are usually placed high up in tall trees standing near or in water. The habit of breeding in colonies has greatly facilitated the work of destruction, since the market hunter has only to visit the rookery when the young are in the nests (the plumes of the parent birds are then at their finest) to kill off the entire colony. No matter how often the parents are shot at, they will continue to return with food for the young until the last one perishes. Incidentally the young are left to starve.

The egret is one of the most widely distributed of the whole family of herons. Originally it ranged from southern Canada to Patagonia, and throughout the whole of that extensive area the same story of persecution has been repeated. To-day there is no place in its North American range where it is common. The largest colonies in the United States were formerly along the Gulf coast from Louisiana to Florida, up the Atlantic coast to southern New Jersey, and up the larger rivers of the Mississippi Valley to Wisconsin and Indiana. So generally distributed were these herons in Indiana that they have been known to nest in Knox, Gibson, Daviess, Dekalb, Steuben, Noble, Jasper, Porter, Lake, and Starke Counties. The southern third of Indiana marked the northern limit of the great breeding colonies, where, in Daviess County, as many as a thousand birds have been seen in a single flock; but smaller colonies nested north to northern Indiana, and even two-thirds of the way up the western shore of Lake Michigan to Two Rivers, Wis.

The numbers formerly breeding near the Pacific coast were not as great as in the interior, owing to the lack of suitable nesting sites, but several strong colonies existed around Tulare Lake, Cal., and a large colony found congenial conditions near Malheur Lake, in eastern Oregon. So thoroughly has the plume hunter done his work that only a pitiable fraction is left in California.

Notwithstanding the severe persecution to which the birds have been subjected, a remnant of the species is still left, for during the last 10 years the birds have been recorded at the following places:

Rhode Island: East Greenwich, August 16, 1904; Point Judith, August 2, 1909.

New York: Montauk, July 23, 1900; Ontario County; August, 1905; East Windham, July 18, 1906.

New Jersey: Ridgewood, July, 1902; Wading River, August, 1905; Englewood, July 22, 1906; Black Point, July 6, 1908; Seabright, August 5, 1908.

Pennsylvania: Berwyn, July 26, 1902; Bristol, July 20, 1906; Ashbourne, July 30, 1906.

Ohio: Cincinnati, August, 1902.

Indiana: Waterloo, April 22, 1905.

Arkansas: Walker Lake, nested 1910.

Missouri: A few nested in southeastern part of State before 1900.

Nebraska: Nehawka, May 2, 1905.

Colorado: Near Denver, April 26, 1907.

Distribution of the Egret (*Herodias egretta*).

SNOWY EGRET. (*Egretta candidissima.*)

This smaller white heron is even more beautiful than its larger relative, for during the breeding season, in addition to the long dorsal plumes, it is adorned with beautiful plumes on both head and neck. On account of its superb nuptial plumage the snowy heron has been the most sought of plume birds, with a correspondingly marked diminution in its numbers. Formerly it ranged from southern Canada to Chile and Argentina; now it is almost extinct on the whole Pacific coast, and so greatly reduced in the Mississippi Valley and on the Atlantic coast that only the most rigorous enforcement of protective laws can prevent its total extinction.

Like most herons it breeds in colonies and hence falls an easy prey to the plume hunter. The colonies were largest and most numerous in the Gulf States from Texas to Florida, but the bird was not rare as a breeder in the Mississippi Valley as far north as southern Indiana and on the Atlantic coast as far north as southern New Jersey. The great swamps of the lower Ohio, with their abundance of proper food and enormous trees suitable for nesting sites, are admirably adapted to the needs of the birds and would undoubtedly be again occupied by this strikingly handsome species under a proper system of protection. There are comparatively few natural enemies of the birds in this section, and if they were relieved from the attacks of human persecutors the annual increase in numbers would be rapid.

The great colonies were killed off between 1880 and 1888; since then the bird has been very rare north of the Gulf States. A very extensive series of rookeries was located formerly in southern New Jersey and the birds were still abundant in 1872. The last of these colonies were destroyed in 1886 and 1887, one man killing 73 birds in one day. In recent years one bird was observed near Camden, July 16, 1904. The nesting of a single pair at Sayville, Long Island, in 1885, is the latest breeding record north of New Jersey; the latest breeding records in the upper Mississippi Valley are 1890 in Knox County, Ind., and 1895 at Lincoln, Nebr. Some of the latest records in the northern part of the bird's range are: Saratoga County, N. Y., 1893; St. Albans, Vt., October, 1890; Billings, Mo., August, 1895; Odin, Ill., August 7, 1895; Cleveland, Ohio, August 25, 1889; Dunnville, Ontario, May 18, 1884; and Lake Koshkonong, Wis., August, 1886.

Distribution of the Snowy Egret (*Egretta candidissima*).

